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## THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

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27 December 1976  
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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence  
Deputy Director for Intelligence

FROM: National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs

SUBJECT: Review of "B" Team Report on Soviet Objectives

1. As you know, the referenced "B" Team report contained both an alternative view of Soviet objectives and an extensive critique of present and past US estimates about Soviet force programs and capabilities. I have pointed out to the NFIB, in the presence of the "B" Team, that the "B" Team's critique of estimative methodology and conclusions is dependent on, and indeed part of, the "B" Team's case for a more ominous interpretation of Soviet objectives. I have also acknowledged that in the interests of getting on with this year's NIE, only a preliminary review of the "B" Team critique has been made, but that a critical and self-critical review of it must be performed. (See my statement to NFIB, attached.)

2. It is apparent that much of the "B" Team's critique of NIE's is and will be seen to be directed at CIA as an institution. Reasons for this include CIA's well-known leading role in the preparation of NIEs, the "B" Team's citation of certain CIA reports along with the NIE's, and the fact that this year the NIE itself contains dissenting statements about Soviet objectives by DIA and all of the military services which are generally consistent with the "B" Team's views. The "B" Team's separate recommendations to PFIAB state explicitly that CIA is the problem. (See paragraph 2B, page 4, of their recommendations, attached.)

3. Partly in response to my expressed concerns but mostly on OSR's initiative, the responsible offices of CIA have already prepared some hasty comments on the "B" Team's criticisms as they apply to the current estimate. Those comments contributed to my remarks to NFIB. But no one has had time to scrub and consolidate them, to review past estimates, or to draw the careful conclusions which would be necessary to evaluate the validity of the "B" Team's general conclusions and, hence, its recommendations. (See internal OSR transmittal memo, attached.)

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SUBJECT: Review of "B" Team Report on Soviet Objectives

4. In order to move on with this important task expeditiously, professionally, and objectively, I believe it is necessary to prepare the equivalent of a CIA Intelligence Memorandum analyzing the "B" Team report and current and past estimates. This would fulfill a recommendation by PFIAB that the experiment in competitive analysis include written commentary by each team on the other team's findings. In this case, the "B" Team's report is already such a commentary. In this case also, the full scope of the "B" Team report is well beyond the purview of the counterpart "A" Team. Partly for this reason, partly to get on with it, and partly because the "B" Team's criticisms are so clearly directed at CIA, I believe it would be preferable not to handle this review as an interagency project, at least initially.

5. Because of the work involved, the other tasks of substance and reorganization confronting the DDI, and the desirability of employing qualified but disinterested expertise, I have taken the liberty of inviting [REDACTED] to return from retirement temporarily, immediately after the first of the year, to offer his services as principal analyst on this project. To complete it promptly and effectively, he would need contact points and assistance from the DDI and DDI offices as well as the D/DCI/NI. The project would have to be understood to have as legitimate a claim on analytical, supervisory, and clerical resources as other substantive intelligence tasks. If these conditions are met, I believe that an end-January deadline for completing the project would be realistic.

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6. I hope you will agree that this is the correct next step and that it is a vital one. Granted that there may be pressures to respond immediately to the recommendations of the "B" Team and PFIAB about intelligence methodology and organization, particularly at a time of change in the Administration. But the long-term role of CIA and the DCI, the long-term contribution of intelligence to national security, and the long-term stance of the US toward the USSR are all put at issue in this "B" Team report. In these circumstances, our approach to the report and the recommendations should be as professional as possible.

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[REDACTED]  
*for* Howard Stoertz, Jr.

Attachments

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20 December 1976  
H. StoertzPRELIMINARY COMMENTS"B Team" Criticisms of NIE Estimates  
on Soviet Strategic Programs and Capabilities

This "B Team" was invited to see whether a good case could be made that Soviet objectives were more ambitious and threatening than perceived by the authors of NIEs. More than half of its report is a critique of US estimates, including past and present estimates on specific Soviet force programs and capabilities. The "A Team" on Soviet objectives bears no responsibility for such estimates. In the interests of completing NIE 11-3/8-76 somewhere near on schedule, we have not diverted analytical resources to a thorough review of this portion of the "B Team" report. We will have to take the time to do it, critically and self-critically. The "A Team" has, however, given up some of its time this morning so that I could perform the duty of offering the members of NFIB some preliminary comments, which may be confirmed or refuted by detailed examination.

General Criticisms

We need to consider three general criticisms: narrowness, concentration on technical matters, "mirror-imaging."

The "B Team" criticizes the 11-3/8 series for concentrating on the relatively narrow issue of intercontinental forces and failing to address Soviet "grand strategy" (pp 10-11). The basic answer is that the physical threat to the US and its Triad is not an improper subject for an NIE. The

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intelligence community may or may not have an accurate appreciation of Soviet "grand strategy," but it was never our intention to bind all of our conclusions relevant to the total "correlation of forces" into this particular estimate.

The "B Team" report correctly notes that estimates in these series concentrate on "hardware" and information from technical sources (page 9). It then asserts that by glossing over evidence from other sources we have unconsciously made unsupported and questionable assumptions about Soviet objectives, and that this is the primary cause of recurrent underestimates (page 10). As the "A Team" report on Soviet objectives will demonstrate, however, we devote considerable attention to the so-called "soft" sources. We use such information in analyzing forces and capabilities as well as in assessments of Soviet objectives. The "B Team" may disagree with our interpretations of this evidence, but we do not disregard it.

We acknowledge the "B Team's" related claim that our estimates have included "mirror-imaging." In some cases Soviet forces and capabilities are weighed in terms of US concepts. The purpose of the NIE 11-3/8 series is to provide intelligence on Soviet forces and capabilities as an input for US policy decisions, and we seek to present the data in a way that will be meaningful to US planners. With respect to "mirror-imaging" Soviet objectives, this is a serious charge which will have to be examined very carefully. Some of us think that because we are looking at a complex society in a complex world, distinctions can and should be made between, say, military doctrine and leadership expectations. In some cases, therefore, what the "B Team" calls "mirror-imaging" is in reality an honest disagreement about substance. Thus the charge

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of "mirror-imaging," and the selective quotation from past estimates to support it, should not be regarded as independent of the "B Team's" case for a more ominous interpretation of Soviet objectives, but as dependent on and part of that case.

One of our problems may be that we have tended to concentrate on the question of Soviet policy for the period of an estimate, leaving unsaid some truths about long-term Soviet goals. We are seeking to guard against any such tendency in the presentation of the present estimate.

#### Central Systems

The "B Team," like all critics for years, notes past underestimates of Soviet missile forces (page 20). These were indeed serious. Partly because of past misestimates, the 11-3/8 series now presents a range of alternative future Soviet force levels and capabilities as a more effective way to assist US planners. The "B Team" fails to recognize this methodology and its importance.

#### Economic Constraints

In implying that low estimates of Soviet defense spending have warped our estimates of Soviet forces (page 21), the "B Team" has misperceived our procedures. Our cost estimates have been based on our estimates of actual forces, not the reverse. The force estimates have been much more heavily influenced by the record of Soviet performance than by gross resource constraints. The "B Team" also fails to note that NIE discussion of Soviet military programs has generally been in terms of dollar costs, while it was the ruble cost estimates which were underestimated. The suggestion that our military costing analysts are subject to any policy influence whatever (page 22) should be rejected.

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Civil Defense and Military Hardening

We should acknowledge that we failed to give sufficient attention to Soviet civil defenses in the early 1970s (page 23). This is an instance in which "B Team" comments about "mirror-imaging" are relevant, in part because intelligence research priorities are affected by the needs expressed by US policymaking consumers of intelligence. Also, a review of evidence in 1970 did not suggest a vigorous Soviet program. The "B Team" criticism fails to acknowledge our thorough review of this subject during the past year, undertaken promptly when we realized the potential importance of this Soviet program.

Mobile Missiles

Some of the "B Team's" concerns about mobile missiles are the same as ours, but the "B Team" analysis and forecast ignores such factors as the potential US threat to Soviet silos (page 26).

Backfire

The "B Team" alleges intelligence preoccupation with the case for a peripheral role for Backfire (page 27). No NIE has obscured the fact that Backfire can reach the US. I believe we have a responsibility to supply US policymakers with intelligence judgments about both the range and missions of this aircraft--and about differences in the intelligence community on these questions--as we regularly do for other weapon systems.

Anti-Satellite Testing

The "B Team" view on the Soviet antisatellite system (page 29) is generally consistent with ours.

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Strategic ASW

In questioning our estimate of Soviet capabilities to counter the US SSBN force (page 31), the "B Team" uses a logic chain which, however persuasive, is not a substitute for the technical judgments reached by the intelligence community after thorough study. The NIE's have noted that this is a high priority Soviet objective and that Soviet progress in ASW technology must be very carefully watched. Any implication that technical analysis of Soviet ASW is affected by policy considerations (page 33) should be rejected.

ABM, Directed Energy, and Strategic Defense

I find expressions like Soviet laser and CPB efforts in ABM are of a "magnitude that is difficult to overestimate" unprofessional (page 34). There are, for example, differences of view in the intelligence community about whether Soviet directed energy research is more ambitious than that of the US. These differences reflect intensive professional study and debate.

The "B Team's" point about fragmented analysis of Soviet defensive capabilities is well taken. After a detailed review of future air defense capabilities, including the investigation of this subject by one of the other "B Teams," we are being much more cautious about making overall generalizations and net judgments this year (page 34).

Non-Central Systems

The "B Team" is correct that peripheral attack systems are part of the Soviet strategic force posture (page 34). While the subject of NIE 11-3/8 is Soviet forces for intercontinental conflict, an interagency study of peripheral attack forces is currently in process.

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Annex on NIE Perceptions

The quotations from past estimates are obviously very selective. Careful research will be required before any comments can be made.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, President's Foreign Intelligence  
Advisory Board

THROUGH : Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Recommendations of Team "B" - Soviet  
Strategic Objectives

In our critique of current and previous National Intelligence Estimates, we made a concerted effort to identify those aspects of methodology, procedure and institutional structure which we believe have contributed to unsound estimative judgments. In the attached paper we proffer our recommendations to PFIAB concerning improvements in methodology, procedure and structure aimed at correcting the perceived deficiencies. Evidence for our conclusion that the cited shortcomings do, in fact, exist in the NIEs is to be found in the main body of our report.

Professor Richard Pipes, Team Leader

Professor William R. Van Cleave, Team Member

General Daniel O. Graham, Team Member

The Honorable Paul Nitze, Advisor

Ambassador Seymour Weiss, Advisor

Dr. Paul Wolfowitz, Advisor

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Team "B" Recommendations

1. Concerning methodology

A. Mirror Imaging. To overcome the bias toward viewing Soviet motives and intentions in U.S. terms, it is urged that:

1) In dealing with Soviet intentions, the NIEs should integrate observed and projected Soviet weapons' programs and force deployments derived from the "hard" physical data with more thorough analysis of historical, political, institutional, and other "soft" factors shaping Soviet motives and intentions. The search should be for a consistent elucidation of both sets of factors and their interaction. In this connection considerably more attention should be paid to relevant open and clandestinely acquired Soviet pronouncements and writings (especially those directed to internal audiences) than has been the case in the past. In this regard it should be understood that expert analysis of the open material can reveal a great deal, insofar as the Soviet political system often compels the Party to issue to its cadres authoritative guidance on policy matters through unclassified sources;

2) Soviet objectives should be perceived in terms of Soviet concepts: this rule applies especially to the treatment of concepts like "strategy", "strategic threat" and "strategic objectives", all of which should be understood in the Soviet context of "grand strategy." When, for reasons of convenience to U.S. consumers, the NIEs address Soviet military programs in the U.S. rather than the Soviet strategic context, this fact should be made clearly evident to the reader.

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B. Net assessing.\* Whatever their intentions, the drafters of the NIEs do engage in implicit net assessments of sorts, particularly when advancing major judgments in the executive summaries. These assessments are usually so rough, so poorly documented, and essentially so speculative that they invite -- indeed, cannot be immune from -- the injection of the authors' general biases. Where NIE judgments demand net assessment, the netting should be done explicitly, analytically, and thoroughly, not implicitly or perfunctorily. The interface between NIE judgment and net assessment should be identifiable.

C. An integrated view of Soviet weapons and force developments. The NIEs tend to an excessive extent to analyze each Soviet weapon system in isolation from the totality of the Soviet military effort (and indeed from other relevant non-military factors as well), with the result that the overall Soviet military effort appears as less significant than it actually is. Team "B" urges that in the future weapons systems and force developments be examined in a more integrated manner to yield "combined evaluations" more indicative of Soviet total military capabilities and overall intentions.

D. Policy pressures and considerations. In the opinion of Team "B", total avoidance of policy pressure on the intelligence estimating process is an impossible goal. The normal and proper function of policy makers in raising questions which are to be addressed by the intelligence estimators in and of itself influences the answers the latter provide. Some awareness on the part of the estimator of the impact of intelligence judgments in support of or in opposition to policy is unavoidable. Nonetheless, improved methods and procedures adopted for the preparation of the NIEs should be able to minimize the policy pressure

\* What we mean by net assessment in this context is a judgment on the balance between U.S. and Soviet military capabilities based on the relevant static indicators extant or projected, or based on a dynamic analysis of the balance assuming that those capabilities actually are to be called into use. The latter type of net assessment assumes a scenario, but may or may not assume actual warfare.

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on judgments and prevent the abdication by the intelligence apparatus of its responsibility to provide objective answers.

E. Disciplined presentation of conclusions. Key judgments of NIEs are presented in various styles and formats. This on the one hand permits statements to be made with a certainty that is not warranted by the available evidence, and on the other hand permits statements, better supported by the evidence, to be degraded in the reader's mind through the insertion of a clause or sentence that have the effect of dismissing their impact. A more disciplined (though not necessarily rigid) format for NIE key judgments, summaries, and conclusions should be constructed. The format and style should ensure that the various reasonable interpretations of the available evidence are laid out without semantic embellishment; that the pros and cons of evidence supporting each are discussed briefly; that the likelihood of occurrence of each is assessed; and that the requirements for additional data to resolve remaining uncertainties are identified. Further, each major intelligence estimate should contain as an annex a review of the past 2 to 10 years' "track record" of U.S. estimates on the major aspects of the relevant subject matter. Such an annex would be best prepared by a body of analysts not responsible for the estimates critiqued. The purpose of such an annex would not be to criticize or chastise but rather to throw light on possible trends of misanalysis or mistaken judgments so that a compounding of error by continuation into future intelligence estimates can be avoided.

## 2. Concerning procedures.

A. Some, though undoubtedly not all of the methodological shortcomings which Team "B" found in the National Intelligence Estimates can be overcome by improving the process of their preparation and review. The authors of the NIEs will always remain in some measure prone to perceive the USSR in U.S. terms and to allow political considerations to affect their judgments. Nevertheless by minimizing inherent institutional biases and broadening the range of judgments brought to bear on the NIEs it should be possible to weaken considerably the impact of factors which have accounted in the past for NIE misperceptions.

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B. Team "B" considers the organizational position of the NIE function within the national defense - security - foreign policy complex less than optimal for guarding against both policy and institutional biases. Current and previous organizational entities charged with preparation and processing of NIEs have been subordinate to the Director, CIA, and staffed almost exclusively with CIA officials. This arrangement was intended to compensate for the real or alleged biases of the Departments of Defense and State, but it can over-compensate by encouraging the institutional biases of the Central Intelligence Agency itself.

C. Team "B" recommends that some combination of the following three steps be considered:

- 1) The first involves building as much immunity to institutional pressures as possible into that entity which is charged with preparing NIEs on Soviet strategic objectives. There are various ways to accomplish this end. One attractive possibility is to identify an official in the Executive Office of the President who would be charged with assuring such immunity and who would report directly to the President. His staff would be small and guarded against acquiring an institutional life of its own. Members of the staff would be drawn from the various intelligence organizations and serve relatively short tenures (3-4 years). The official charged with this function would be genuinely removed from and independent of the operating membership of the NFIB by the devices of a separate budget, a separate staff, and a separate physical location. He should have the authority to subpoena substantive intelligence officers from any agency and to require of pertinent departments and agencies such net assessments as may be necessary to the NIE process;

- 2) The second step involves the marshalling of expertise in and out of government to offset the temptation to mirror-image. The official charged with assuring the objectivity of the NIEs (as specified above) should enlist the part-time services of a panel of prominent outside specialists for the purpose of reviewing estimates so as to identify judgments that are based on questionable assumptions concerning Soviet strategic

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doctrine and behavior. Such reviews should be carried out immediately post facto, but they should not form a part of the NIE preparation process itself.

3) The third step involves periodic independent checks on both the process and the substance of the NIEs by employing procedures similar to the PFIAB-conceived Team "B" approach. Intermittently, perhaps initially every second year, a team of outside experts who owe no formal responsibility to the existing governmental intelligence agencies would be assembled to play the adversary role. The composition of the Team would vary every time. Team members would have available all the pertinent information from all the sources. The effort would be reasonably time constrained. The report of the Team would be subject neither to review nor to revision but would be made available directly to the President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense. (After the Team had made its report, it would become available to other governmental agencies for criticism but not for revision). While this step would not eliminate the particular views and biases which the non-governmental experts would bring to their study, it would be free of the bureaucratic pressures or biases of the existing governmental intelligence -- or indeed policy -- agencies.

D. Team "B" has not addressed itself to substantive national intelligence issues other than Soviet strategic objectives. Should similarly critical issues arise -- e.g., with regard to China or the Middle East -- the above recommended processes could help to ensure objective intelligence support to top policy makers.

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